Michelangelo's Lesson. The Baroque Bozzetto between Creation and Destruction

van Gastel, Joris

J. Joris van Gastel

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When during restoration works in 1982 Roman workers broke through a chimneypiece on the first floor of a house at the Via del Colosseo, they made an incredible find.[1] Among the rubble that was used to stuff the construction were shards of garden vases, fragments of antique sculptures, and several pieces of clay figures. The latter, now restored and conserved at the Museo di Roma, can certainly be deemed unique. No less than nine terracotta sketch models or *bozzetti* could be reconstructed and are now attributed to some of the most renowned sculptors working in seventeenth-century Rome. The person who brought these objects together has been identified as the little known sculptor Francesco Antonio Fontana, who must have cherished them as tangible reminders of his work with more talented contemporaries. Even so, some later inhabitant of Fontana's house discarded them as "things of little value," cutting the models up and using them for filling the chimneypiece.[2]

Among these sketches, so miraculously saved from oblivion, we may zoom in on one particularly attractive exemplar (figs. 1–2). Depicting what in all

1 Elena Bianca Di Gioia: Le collezioni di scultura del Museo di Roma: il Seicento, Rome 2002, p. 257 ff.; Elena Bianca Di Gioia: "Casa e bottega del Cav. Francesco Antonio Fontana": materiali dallo studio di un scultore romano della seconda metà del '600, in: Maresita Nota (ed.): Archeologia nel centro storico, Rome 1986, pp. 151–160.

2 Di Gioia, "Casa e bottega" (as fn. 1), p. 151, suggests this will have happened towards the end of the eighteenth century. Some broken bozzetti from Bernini's estate, even if regarded as things of little value, were still considered useful for his pupil Giulio Cartari; cf. Stanislao Fraschetti: Il Bernini: la sua vita, la sua opera, il suo tempo, Milano 1900, p. 431: "Nel detto studio vi erano alcune teste di gesso ed altre parti umane con alcuni modelli di creta mezzi rotti, quali tutti per essere stati trasportati in guardaroba sono rotti e spezzati, e qualche porzione ne fu donata al Sig. Giulio Cordorè [Cartari] allievo del Sig. Cav.re [Bernini], per essere cose di poco rilievo."

Fig. 1 Gian Lorenzo Bernini (attributed): Bozzetto for a Saint.

probability must have been a saint, and now attributed to Gian Lorenzo Bernini, it is characterized by a directness and velocity of modelling that hardly any of the preserved works of this type equals.[3] In its restored, though still incomplete state, rather than suffering from its careless treatment – that of the artist itself, and that of the later owner – the figure has managed to preserve a striking pres-

3 Di Gioia: Le collezioni di scultura (as fn. 1), no. 16.

Fig. 2 Other view of figure 1.

ence. From the smears and cracks emerges the sensation of a physical, moving body covered by thick draperies that, despite their heaviness, seem vibrantly alive. And at the same time, with this small body, we sense another presence, no less animate: that of the skilful hands of which the ostensive traces are here forever cast in clay. This image, then, so close to the verge of obliteration, does not dissolve into nothingness, but reaffirms itself as a creative statement, and not in spite of, but precisely because of its hampered state. The destructive gesture has become its own opposite.

Even if this dual nature may be deemed exemplary for the *bozzetto* in general, there is little in the scholarly literature that helps us to account for the tension between creation and destruction.[4] As Malcolm Baker has noted, there are roughly two ways in which this material is generally discussed.[5] Where sketch models in wax or clay are part of monographic studies and catalogues – Baker singles out Jennifer Montagu's landmark study on Alessandro Algardi – they often function as illustrations to a narrative that is structured primarily by the "archival thread"; the discussion of the role of these sketches thus remains subordinate to the main chronological argument.[6] When, on the other hand, the discussion focuses on sculptural practice in particular, such as in Rudolf Wittkower's *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*, the view of the sculptural process is, in Baker's words, "essentially proleptic" in that the "concern above all is with the finished work and the procedures involved in producing this."[7] The result of both approaches is the suggestion of a "linear development of composition through models…"[8]

Notwithstanding one or two interesting contributions, also more recent scholarly literature has little to offer to counter this way of thinking.[9] This is all the more surprising considering the recent interest in topics revolving around terms such as 'model,' 'medium,' 'imprint,' 'indexicality,' and 'trace,' which all relate in interesting ways to the *bozzetto* and its characteristics.[10] Moreover, it

4 Though see James Elkins: Marks, Traces, "Traits," Contours, "Orli," and "Splendores": Nonsemiotic Elements in Pictures, in: Critical Inquiry 21/4 (1995), pp. 822–860, who notes in more general terms that (832) "[m]arks, together with the figures and images they build, are always compromised by age, by accident, and –most importantly – by each other, and they are always partly illegible."

5 Malcolm Baker: Limewood, Chiromancy and Narratives of Making. Writing About the Materials and Processes of Sculpture, in: Art History 21/4 (1998), pp. 509–510.

6 Jennifer Montagu: Alessandro Algardi, 2 vols., New Haven/London 1985.

7 Baker: Limewood, Chiromancy and Narratives of Making (as fn. 5), p. 509; Rudolf Wittkower: Sculpture: Processes and Principles, London 1977.

8 Baker: Limewood, Chiromancy and Narratives of Making (as fn. 5), p. 510. Cf. Colette Czapski Hemingway: Of Clay, and the Initial Stages of Sculpture, in: Sketches in Clay for Projects by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, ed. by Ivan Gaskell/Henry Lie, Cambridge, MA 1999, p. 33.

9 A significant exception is Michael W. Cole: The Figura Sforzata: Modelling, Power and the Mannerist Body, in: Art History 24/4 (2001), p. 520–551.

10 See e.g. Godfried Boehm: Ikonisches Wissen: Das Bild als Modell, in: ibid.: Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen: Die Macht des Zeigens, Berlin 2007, pp. 114–140; Horst Bredekamp: Modelle der Kunst und der Evolution, in: Modelle des Denkens, Debatte 2, Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 2005, pp. 13–20; Michael W. Cole: The Cult of Materials, in: Revival and Invention: Sculpture through its Material Histories, ed. by Sébastien Clerbois/Martina Droth, Oxford 2011, pp. 1–15; Hans Belting: Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft, München 2001, pp. 19–33; Georges Didi-Huberman: La ressemblance par contact: Archéologie, anachronisme et modernité de l'empreint, Paris 2008; Mary Ann Do-

remains to be seen if this idea of a linear development reflects actual artistic practice to begin with. In his study of Angelo de' Rossi's monument to Pope Alexander VIII in Saint Peter's, Edward Olszewski has problematized precisely this kind of teleological treatment of the sculptor's models. His observations are worth repeating here at length:

> "In those rare instances where several *bozzetti* survive for a project, caution must be registered in any attempt to identify one of a number of *bozzetti* as a *modello*, or to arrange them in a sequence, because by definition *bozzetti* served first as compositional studies for the sculptor, with a selected group afterward intended to offer a variety of choices to the patron. […] The selection of one terra-cotta model from among several for a given figure reveals nothing of the sequence of execution. That is, a *bozzetto* picked as the final design for a figure might have been the first of a dozen or more possibilities, or one of the last. Also, a *modello* could be fashioned as a combination of elements from several *bozzetti*, the turn of the head taken from one figure, placement of arms from a second, and pose, expression, and drapery from still others."[11]

Although Olszewski's remark may have a rather relativist tone to it, this does not mean that nothing remains to be said. For, indeed, there are other questions we may ask of these objects. For example, the question of their particular role in the creative process, and more specifically, what qualities allowed them to fulfil this role, has hardly been touched upon. Focusing on some seventeenth-century sources, this paper aims to provide a first ground for a new perspective.

Two Times Baldinucci

A seemingly insignificant source may be introduced to open such a perspective, namely, Filippo Baldinucci's short definition of the term *modello* in his *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* of 1681.[12] "The model," he writes there,

ane (ed.): Indexicality: Trace and Sign, in: Differences 18 (2007); Sybille Krämer/Gernot Grube/Werner Kogge (eds.): Spur: Spurenlesen als Orientierungstechnik und Wissenskunst, Frankfurt a. M. 2007.

11 Edward J. Olszewski: Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni (1667–1740) and the Vatican Tomb of Pope Alexander VIII, Philadelphia 2004, pp. 237–238.

12 The distinction between the terms *bozzetto* and *modello* as the rough first sketch and the more finished model, respectively, develops only towards the end of the seventeenth century; cf. Czapski Hemingway: Of Clay (as fn. 8), p. 34, n. 8. For a more general discussion of the term *modello* in early modern Italy see Johannes Myssok: Bildhauerische Konzeption und plastisches Modell in der Renaissance, Münster 1999, pp. 15–19; Michael Hirst, Carmen Bambach Cappel: A Note on the Word *Modello*, in: The Art Bulletin 74/1 (1992), pp. 172–173.

"is the first, and most important effort of the whole work, for in breaking apart, and rebuilding again [*guastando, e raccomodando*], the artist achieves the greatest beauty and perfection."[13] The radical character of this definition stands out if we contrast it for example with Giorgio Vasari's ideas about modelling. The artist, he writes, working "with judgement and the hands," adds the material "little by little," shaping it with the spatulas, thus building and refining "until with the fingers he gives the model its final finish."[14] Whereas for Vasari, then, modelling is primarily an art of adding and subtle modelling (Leon Battista Alberti had defined it as an art of adding and taking away in his *De Statua*), Baldinucci rather focuses on a moment of destruction or breaking apart.[15]

Baldinucci's surprising reversal of the traditional account of modelling may be better understood when we relate it to an anecdote he has noted down in his *Notizie de' professori del disegno*, published in the same year as the *Vocabolario*. The anecdote, which discusses the *modello* in strikingly similar terms, relates about the Roman encounter between the Flemish sculptor Giambologna and the then old Michelangelo. Having made a model of his own invention, finished "with the breath," as Baldinucci writes, the Flemish sculptor, proud as he must have been, went out to show it to the aged master. But Michelangelo was not impressed. Taking the model in his hands, he crushed it completely (*tutto glie lo guastò*). Then, rearranging the figure with "marvellous skill" and according to his own insights, he said to the young Fleming: "now go and first learn to sketch (*bozzare*) before you learn to finish."[16]

13 Filippo Baldinucci: Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno, Firenze 1681, s.v. "modello": "È il modello prima, e principal fatica di tutta l'opera, essendo che in essa guastando, e raccomodando, arriva l'artefice al più bello ed al più perfetto."

14 Giorgio Vasari: Le vite de' più eccelenti pittori, scultori e architettori nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568, ed. by Rosanna Bettarini/Paola Barocchi, Firenze 1966, vol. 1, p. 88: "…et a poco a poco col giudicio e le mani lavorando, crescendo la materia, con istecchi d'osso, di ferro o di legno si spinge indentro la cera, e con mettere dell'altra sopra si aggiugne e raffina, finché con le dita si dà a questo modello l'ultimo pulimento. E finito ciò, volendo fare di quegli che siano di terra, si lavora a similitudine della cera…"

15 Leon Battista Alberti: On Painting and On Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua, ed. and trans. by Cecil Grayson, London 1972, p. 121. Cf. Michelangelo's remark in Paola Barocchi (ed.): Pittura e scultura nel Cinquecento, Livorno 1998, p. 84: "Io intendo scultura quella che si fa per forza di levare; quella che si fa per via di porre è simile alla pittura." For a detailed account of modeling practice in the seventeenth century see Anthony B. Sigel: The Clay Modeling Techniques of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, in: Ivan Gaskell/Henry Lie (eds.): Sketches in Clay (as fn. 8), pp. 48–72.

16 Filippo Baldinucci: Notizie dei professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua, ed. by Ferdinando Ranalli/Paola Barocchi, Firenze 1975, vol. 2, p. 556: "…soleva poi in vecchiaia raccontare a' suoi famigliare, che avendo un giorno fatto un modello di propria invenzione, il quale aveva finito, come noi usiamo dire, coll'alito, l'andò a

Fig. 3 Federico Zuccari: Portrait of Giambologna, Drawing, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Even if Michelangelo's destructive act must have been quite a blow to the young sculptor, the lesson was not lost on him. A portrait of the artist, drawn by his friend Federico Zuccari, shows him glancing upward to the sky as if searching for divine inspiration while holding in his hands Michelangelo's model for the *Samson and a Philistine* (fig. 3).[17] As Michelangelo's work was never execut-

mostrare al gran Michelagnolo; il quale presolo in mano, tutto glie lo guastò, secondo però quello che parve a lui, attitudinandolo di nuovo, e risolvendolo con meravigliosa bravura tutto al contrario di quello che il giovanetto aveva fatto, e sì gli disse: or va prima ad imparare a bozzare e poi a finire."

17 The drawing is a preparatory drawing for Giambologna's portrait in the cupola of the Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence. Here, the *modello* is replaced by the more straightforward attributes of hammer and square. For the friendship between Giambologna and Zuccari see Joris van Gastel: Hoc opus exculpsit Io. Bologna. Andreas Andreanus Incisit: Andrea Andreani's chiaroscuro houtsneden naar Giambologna, in: Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum 1 (2007), pp. 26–28. On the *Samson and a Philistine* model and its influence see Eike Schmidt: Die Überlieferung von Michelangelos verlorenem Samson-Modell, in: Mitteilungen des Kunsthistori-

ed in marble, we may interpret the drawing as suggesting that Giambologna fulfilled the promise it holds. In any case, the drawing, like Baldinucci's anecdote, stresses the importance of Michelangelo-as-a-modeller for Giambologna; holding his example firmly in his hands, he touches it where the hands of Michelangelo had touched it before.[18]

It is not this particular relation between Michelangelo and Giambologna that interests us here, though, but rather the message of Michelangelo's lesson itself, or rather, how it has been conceived of by Baldinucci. For indeed, whether or not we believe this episode ever to have taken place, it is clear that Baldinucci favours the big gesture. Giambologna's perfectly finished model is contrasted here with the rough character of the sketch, the *bozza*, defined in the *Vocabolario della Crusca* of 1612 as "neither polished, nor brought to perfection."[19] Giambologna's model may have been the result of an approach as described by Vasari, the artist working little by little towards the cleanly finished sculpture; Michelangelo's intervention suggests a breaking apart and rearranging in quick, powerful gestures. Where Giambologna's model was finished "with the breath," that of Michelangelo carried the traces of his destructive hands.

Creative Destruction

Baldinucci's definition in his *Vocabolario* indicates that Michelangelo's destructive act in itself can already be deemed productive. Moreover, it implies that there is always already something there to be destroyed, to be rearranged. We may further develop Baldinucci's accounts in terms of creative destruction, a term which has its origins in economics, but was introduced to the critical vocabulary of art history by Horst Bredekamp as *produktive Zerstörung*.[20] Explor-

schen Institutes in Florenz 40, 1/2 (1997), pp. 78–147; Angela Hass: Michelangelo's Samson and the Philistine: Conception, Meaning and Subsequent Influence, in: Apollo 139 (1993), pp. 383–386.

18 For its significance for the work of Giambologna, and for Giambologna as a model-maker more generally, see Volker Krahn: I bozzetti del Giambologna, in: Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi/Dimitrios Zikos (eds.): Giambologna: gli dei, gli eroi, Florence/Milano 2006, pp. 44–61, in part. p. 46, and Charles Avery: Giambologna: The Complete Sculpture, Mt. Kisco, NY 1987, pp. 63–70; for Michelangelo Jeannine Alexandra O'Grody: "Un semplice modello": Michelangelo and his Three-Dimensional Preparatory Works, PhD thesis, Cleveland 1999. For a broader discussion of this practice in Renaissance Italy, see Myssok: Bildhauerische Konzeption (as fn. 12).

19 Accademia della Crusca: Vocabolario della Crusca, Venezia 1612, s.v. "Bozzo": "… la prima forma non ripulíta, ne condotta a perfezione, propriamente di scultura, pittura, e scrittura."

20 Horst Bredekamp: Sankt Peter in Rom und das Prinzip der produktiven Zerstörung: Bau und Abbau von Bramante bis Bernini, Berlin 2000. See also Uwe Fleckner, Maike Steinkamp, Hendrik Ziegler: Produktive Zerstörung: Konstruktion

ing the complicated building history of the Roman basilica of Saint Peter's, Bredekamp shows how, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this history can be understood as a constant oscillation between old and new, between creation and destruction. In our case, though, we have a more intimate form of creative destruction. It is not, or not only, the old that is destroyed in order to make way for the new, but the destructive gesture in itself becomes creative. If in architecture, and to an extent also on paper or canvas, the new is drawn over the old, disturbing it by partly obscuring, blotting it out by the suggestive presence of the new line, in wax or clay we cannot speak of such an overlap.[21] Here, it is always the material itself that takes on a new shape. The old becomes part of the new. Peter Geimer has argued that this kind of creative destruction, or more literally, disturbance, is still very much part of the intentional practice of making. If the disturbance is intended, he argues, it does not really disturb.[22] But is this actually the case?

A hint of the disturbance involved in this reshaping of old forms can be found in an often cited passage from Marco Boschini's *Breve instruzione*, published in 1674 as a preface to his *Ricche minere della pittura veneziana*. The author here gives a description of the painting technique of Titian, though his choice of words is indicative of a very sculptural way of thinking about paint. After Titian had made the first sketches of the figures he wanted to paint, Boschini writes, he returned to them only much later:

> "…he examined them with rigorous observance, as if they had been his capital enemies, to see if he could find some fault in them; and discovering something that did not conform to the delicacy of his intentions, as a charitable surgeon he cured the patient, cutting away some bulge, or surplus of flesh, straightening an arm, if the shape of the bones was not all

und Dekonstruktion eines Forschungsgebiets, in: ibid. (eds.): Der Sturm der Bilder: Zerstörte und zerstörende Kunst von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart, Berlin 2011, pp. 1–11. For a history of the term in economics see Hugo Reinert, Erik Reinert: Creative Destruction in Economics: Nietzsche, Sombart, Schumpeter, in: Jürgen G. Backhaus/Wolfgang Drechsler: Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), New York 2006, pp. 55–85.

21 There are, in other words, significant differences between the mark placed on a surface and a trace drawn in a certain material. For an "ontology of marks" see Elkins: Marks (as fn. 4), pp. 840–60.

22 Peter Geimer: Bild und Bildstörung. Wissen im "Modus der Aufdringlichkeit," in: Renate Lachmann/Stefan Rieger (eds.): Text und Wissen: technologische und anthropologische Aspekte, Tübingen 2003, p. 92: "Künstler, die eigene oder fremde Werke zerstören, deren materiellen Verfall oder das Werk des Zufalls miteinbeziehen, bewegen sich immer noch innerhalb einer Ordnung der Autorschaft, der Intentionalität und der Herstellung. Eine solche intendierte Störung stört aber nicht wirklich."

> to well adjusted, [and] if the foot had turned out ugly when first placed, he put it on its place without feeling sorry for the pain it caused…"[23]

Boschini's metaphor of the surgeon makes the destructive character of Titian's interventions in his own sketches painfully apparent. Bernini is said to have remarked that the artist always has a prejudice in favour of his last sketch, "a particular love for novelty."[24] In the light of such a love, Titian's remorselessness is very much a heroic feat.[25] Without flinching, he cuts into his own darlings. It is not only the pain of the patient, though, which is at stake here. To be sure, Giambologna felt the pain too, when the less charitable surgeon Michelangelo cured his patient.

Bernini's "particular love" can be seen as what in research concerned with sketching and design has been called *fixation*: the inability of the artist to see alternative solutions where one has been found.[26] The deadlock of fixation can be broken by literally breaking away the detail that closes the image off for

23 Marco Boschini: La carta del navegar pitoresco. Edizione critica con la "Breve Instruzione" premessa alle "Ricche Minere della Pittura Veneziana," ed. by Anna Pallucchini, Venice/Rome 1966, p. 711: "…con rigorosa osservanze li esaminava, come se fossero stati suoi capitali nemici, per vedere se in loro poteva trovar difetto; e scoprendo alcuna cosa, che non concordasse al delicato suo intendimento, come chirurgo benefico medicava l'infermo, se faceva di bisogno spolpargli qualche gonfiezza, o soprabondanza di carne, radrizzandogli un braccio, se nella forma l'ossatura non fosse così aggiustata, se un piede nella positura avesse presa attitudine disconcia, mettendolo a luogo senza compatir al suo dolore, e cose simili." For further discussion of the association with sculpture Joris van Gastel: Il Marmo Spirante: Sculpture and Experience in Seventeenth-Century Rome, PhD thesis, Leiden 2011, p. 132 ff.

24 Paul Fréart Seigneur de Chantelou: Journal de voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France, ed. by Milovan Stani , Paris 2001, pp. 48–49: "…s'attachant toujours à la dernière production par un amour particulier qu'on a pour la nouveauté."And also: "…l'amour de la nouveauté, lequel empêche presque toujours qu'on ne puisse faire choix de la meilleure pensée." Cf. Carlo Cesare Malvasia: Felsina pittrice: vite dei pittori bolognesi, ed. by Giovanni Pietro Zanotti, Bologna 1841, vol. 2, p. 54: "Interrogato [Guido Reni] da un gran signore, qual fosse la più bell'opera avesse mai fatto: quella che ora lavoro, disse; e se dimane un'altra ne farò, sarà quella; e se dopo un'altra quella pure."

25 Thus, the anecdote reflects the masculine terminology associated with Titian's loose brushwork; cf. Philip Sohm: Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia, in: Renaissance Quarterly 48/4 (1995), p. 798: "…bold, thrusting, courage, punched, frank, vehement, and stabbed (ardito, botte, bravura, colpato, franco, furioso, pugnato, schermendo, sfodrando)." On this passage in particular see Jodi Cranston: The Muddied Mirror: Materiality and Figuration in Titian's Later Paintings, University Park, PA 2010, p. 8–11.

26 See e.g. Masaki Suwa et al.: Seeing into Sketches: Regrouping Parts Encourages New Interpretations, in: John Gero/Barbara Tversky/Terry Purcell (eds.): Visual and Spatial Reasoning in Design II, Sydney 2001, p. 208 (with further references).

further interpretation, thus replacing definition for ambiguity. It is, we may argue, precisely such an ambiguity that characterizes the traces of destruction; rather than pointing stubbornly in a single direction, they point away, drawing attention to the act that lies at their ground. Before looking closer at these indexical traces themselves though, some remarks concerning what they are indexical of are in order.

Hand and Tool

Michelangelo takes the model in his "most divine hands," and crushes it.[27] Indeed, it is the hand that brings the pain, but also the hand that builds anew. An interesting picture of the role of the hand in modelling appears in Raffaele Soprani's *vita* of the sculptor Nicolò Roccatagliata, Genovese by birth but mainly active in Venice roughly between 1593 and 1636.[28] Soprani, writing in 1674, relates that: "…thanks to the assiduousness of his studies, [Roccatagliata] had trained [*affacilitato*] his hand in such a way, that when modelling in wax, he worked the usual spatula with an extraordinary ease and directness [*franchezza*], carving from the rough material a head in only four strokes…"[29] Rather than the question if Roccatagliata's practice is described accurately here, our interest is in the way this practice is discussed by Soprani. Apparently, the sculptor's striking ability in modelling is the result of a continuous training of the hand; it is the hand itself (with, we may add, in its extension the spatula) that has obtained a certain ease which lies at the base of the artist's accomplishments. The term *franchezza*, in addition, suggests a kind of unmediated directness. Having been first introduced in the art critical discourse in debates regarding questions of authenticity, it indicates a certain spontaneity on the part of the artist, a directness and speed of handling the material that shows the connoisseur the true "hand" of the master.[30]

For a further understanding of the significance of the hand in the practice of modelling, we may turn to Orfeo Boselli's contemporary treatise on the

27 Vasari: Le vite (as fn. 14), vol. 6, p. 40: "…divinissime mani…"

28 For Roccatagliata see Claudia Kryza-Gersch: Due altari seicenteschi a San Marco: Nicolò Roccatagliata e Sebastiano Nicolini, e la produzione di ornamenti in bronzo per le chiese veneziane, in: Matteo Ceriana/Victoria Avery (eds.): L'industria artistica del bronzo del Rinascimento a Venezia e nell'Italia settentrionale, Verona 2008, pp. 253–272 (with further references).

29 Raffaele Soprani: Le vite de pittori, scoltori, et architetti genovesi, Genova 1674, p. 89: "…mercè l'assiduità de' suoi studi, havevasi egli di modo affacilitata la mano, che modellando di cera adoperava con tal franchezza il solito stecco, che dalla rozza massa di quella cavava in quattro colpi una testa…"

30 For a further discussion of the term *franchezza* see Gastel: Il Marmo Spirante (as fn. 23), pp. 161–184.

sculptor's practice, the *Osservazioni della scoltura antica*, even if modelling here too is discussed only briefly.[31] The "agents" involved in modelling, writes Boselli, are the same as with drawing, namely: the eye, the intellect, and the hand; the materials are clay, wax, spatulas [*stecche*] and brushes.[32] Indeed, Boselli's description does not seem to involve anything considerably new. As we have seen, already Vasari had written that the sculptor uses "his judgement and his hands" when making a model.[33] Boselli's introduction of the eye is significant, though, as it points to an understanding of the dialectic nature of the interaction with the material. The sculptor is not only the creator of the work, but also the first beholder. It is in the eye that the love for novelty originates, but also the eye that discovers the new in that what is broken apart.

In Boselli's discussion of the actual practice, however, the eye quickly gets left behind, and the hand takes over. When modelling, so Boselli advises, "one must cut with the nail, working more with the fingers than with the spatulas…"[34] And if the hand seems to be treated here primarily as a tool, earlier, the hand, like the eye and the mind, is defined as an agent, and as such explicitly contrasted with the materials, which include the wax, the clay, the spatulas and the brushes.[35] Yet, in the early modern period, the hand is generally seen as a tool, subordinate to the mind.[36] What can it mean to define the hand as agent, on

31 Two editions, based on different manuscripts, have been published: Orfeo Boselli: Osservazioni sulla scultura antica. I manoscritti di Firenze e di Ferrara, ed. by Antonio P. Torresi, Ferrara 1994; and Orfeo Boselli: Osservazioni della scoltura antica, dai manoscritti Corsini e Doria, ed. by Phoebe Dent Weil, Florence 1978. A comprehensive edition is being prepared by Anthony Colantuono. For a recent discussion of the treatise see Elisabetta Di Stefano: Orfeo Boselli e la "nobiltà" della scultura, in: Aesthetica Preprint 64 (2002), p.1–84; and Maria Cristina Fortunati: Il trattato "Osservationi della scoltura antica" di Orfeo Boselli (1657–1661): per una rilettura, in: Storia dell'arte 100 (2000), p. 69–101.

32 Boselli: Osservazioni sulla scultura antica (as fn. 31), p. 206 [= ff. 14v–15r]: "Modellare non è altro che imitare il rilievo col rilievo. Gli agenti sono gl'istessi del disegno [cf. id., 202 (= f. 10v): '…l'occhio, intelletto e mano.']; le materie sono creta, cera, stecche e pennelli."

33 Vasari: Le vite (as fn. 14), vol. 1, p. 88: "…col giudicio e le mani lavorando…"

34 Boselli: Osservazioni sulla scultura antica (as fn. 31), p. 206: "Si deve, nel modellare, tagliare a ugna, lavorando più con le dita che con li stecchi, per schivare le durezza e seccarie." I quote here the Ferrara manuscript which contains a bit more detail in this sequence than the Florence manuscript. Cf. André Félibien: Des principes de l'architecture, de la sculpture, de la peinture, et des autres arts qui en dependent, Paris 1676, p. 303: "…les plus Pratics se servant plus de leur doigts que d'aucun outil."

35 Cf. *supra*, fn. 32.

36 Cf. Martin Warnke: Der Kopf in der Hand, in: ibid.: Nah und Fern zum Bilde: Beiträge zu Kunst und Kunsttheorie, ed. by. Michael Diers, Köln 1997, p. 112–113. For a more general discussion of the hand in art see Andreas Gormans: Argumente in eigener Sache – Die Hände des Künstlers, in: Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio

a par with the eye and the intellect? Even if we would not easily think of the hand as acting on its own, the significance of the hand as an independent agent was well recognized in the seventeenth century. Some sources outside the art discourse may illustrate this.

In his popular *Ricreazionde del savio* of 1659, a book in praise of the magnificence of God's creation, the Ferrarese *letterato* Danielo Bartoli speaks extensively about the hand. And even if he certainly adheres to the idea that the hand but follows the mind – his point of reference, as for the other authors quoted, is the work of Aristotle and Galen – he does suggest that a slippage may concur between the realms of agent and tool:[37] "…the hand [is] first among the instruments; or better still, it is not just the one instrument, […] but as many instruments as it [the hand], for every art its own, shapes and employs, becoming one with them, as it imbues them with that motion from which they have, together with the hand, almost a soul and intellect…"[38]

If only hesitantly, Bartoli recognizes how the hand and, in its extension, the tool – his list runs from hammer to chisel to brush to plectrum – may gain a life of their own.[39] Hand and tool act as one, almost without regard for the mind. A wholly different approach to the hand is that of the Neapolitan scholar Giambattista della Porta. His *Della Chirofisonomia* is essentially a treatise about the art of hand reading, now hardly taken seriously. Nevertheless, like Bartoli, he does not fail to praise the hand as man's most sophisticated tool. In

(ed.): Die Hand: Elemente einer Medizin- und Kulturgeschichte, Münster 2010, pp. 189–223.

37 Daniello Bartoli: La ricreazione del savio, ed. by Bice Mortara Garavelli, Parma 1992, p. 314: "Ordina dunque la mente come inventrice, la mano come fabbra eseguisce; quella dà l'idea in disegno, questa ne mette il lavoro in opera…"

38 Ibid., p. 333: "Per tutte esse verissimo è quel di Galeno, che la mente è arte prima dell'arti e la mano è istrumento prima che gli strumenti: anzi non un solo, dice il Filosofo, ma tanti quanti ella, per ciascun'arte i propri, ne forma e gli adopera, facendosi uno con essi, onde loro imprime quel moto per cui hanno con lei quasi spirito e ingegno: scarpelli, seghe, lime, tanaglie, martelli, ancudini, taglie, pennelli, agora, spuole, telai, plettri, cetere, e che so io?" Cf. Claudius Galenus: On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body: Peri chreias mori n: De usu partium, trans. by Margaret Tallmadge May, Ithaca 1968, p. 71 (= I.3); Aristotle: The Parts of Animals, in: ibid.: The Complete Works, ed. by Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1, Princeton, NJ 1984, p. 1072 (= IV.10). For a similar suggestion of autonomy of the hand with regard to speech see Giovanni Bonifaccio: Arte de' cenni, Vicenza 1616, pp. 274–275: "Ma particolarmente molte cose con le mani esprimiano, senza leqauli ogni nostra attione sarebbe imperfetta: l'altre parti del corpo aiutano colui, che favella, ma le mani, quasi che elle da se stesse parlano…"

39 For ideas about integration of body and tool, see the classic discussions in Martin Heidegger: Sein und Zeit, Frankfurt a. M. 1977), p. 92 ff.; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Phénoménologie de la perception, Paris 1945, pp. 177–178. For a more neuroscientific perspective see Andy Clark: Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension, Oxford 2008, in particular pp. 30–39.

fact, Della Porta takes his praise even a step further: "…without hands, we would not only be vile and helpless, but the most wretched of savages, and the use of reason (which, moreover, is a heavenly gift), it would have been wanting, and devoid of any function, and afflicted."[40] For Bartoli and even more so for Della Porta, the hand is really on par with the intellect; the two are mutually dependent. The hand and the tool it holds become agents as they determine and define, taking up a guiding role.

Bartoli and Della Porta focus in the first place on the hand that manipulates, but as it touches, the hand also feels. This point is discussed at length in a book that talks exclusively about the hand: Giovanni Battista Pacichelli's *Chiroliturgia* of 1673.[41] Whereas already Aristotle had argued that particularly the sense of touch places man above the animals, Pacichelli refers to Thomas Aquinas and again Galen to demonstrate that the sense of touch is most receptive in the fingers.[42] To feel someone's pulse, he writes, we use the hand, and no other member. This has its significance for the practice of the sculptor too. As Lorenzo Ghiberti had already experienced, there may be subtleties in sculpture that "the eye does not perceive, neither by bright, nor by dimmed light, and only the touching hand may find."[43] When we think of the clay model, it is the hand that feels the cold wetness of the clay, the fine grain of the sand, and the ease with which it gives way under the finger's pressure. Here, the human body interacts with the material at the point where it is both most agile and most sensitive. It is in this light that we may also understand accounts of the artist as having the

40 Giovan Battista della Porta: Della chirofisonomia, in: ibid.: Della magia naturale, trans. by Pompeo Sarnelli, Naples 1677, p. 564: "Ardisco dire, che senza le mani, non solo saressimo vili, & inermi, ma più infelici de' bruti, e l'uso della ragione (che per altro è dono celeste) sarebbe stato egli manco, e privo d'ogni operatione, & afflitto."

41 Giovanni Battista Pacichelli: Chiroliturgia, Coloniae Agrippinae 1673, pp. 46–68.

42 Ibid., pp. 46–47.

43 Lorenzo Ghiberti: I Commentari, ed. by Lorenzo Bartoli, Firenze 1998, p. 108 (= III.2): "À moltissime dolcezze, le quali el viso no lle comprende, né con forte luce, né con temperata, solo la mano a toccarla la truova." Cf. ibid., p. 108 (= III.1): "nessuna cosa il viso scorgeva, se non col tatto la mano la trovava." For a more general discussion on sculpture and touch see Gastel: Il Marmo Spirante (as fn. 23), p. 150–159; Peter Dent: Sculpture and Touch from Pygmalion to the Present, in: Francesca Bacci/Peter Dent (eds.): Sculpture and Touch, London 2008, pp. 14–19; James Hall: Desire and Disgust: Touching Artworks from 1500 to 1800, in: Robert Maniura/Rupert Shepherd (eds.): Presence: The Inherence of the Prototype within Images and Other Objects, Aldershot 2006, pp. 145–160; Geraldine A. Johnson: Touch, Tactility, and the Reception of Sculpture in Early Modern Italy, in: Paul Smith/Carolyn Wilde (eds.): A Companion to Art Theory, Oxford 2002, pp. 61–74; Hans Körner: Der fünfte Bruder: zur Tastwahrnehmung plastischer Bildwerke von der Renaissance bis zum frühen 19. Jahrhundert, in: Artibus et historiae 21/42 (2000), pp. 165–196.

image "at the fingertips."[44] The hands and the tools they hold find their own way, both forming and feeling, cutting through the material without regard for what the eye perceives.

Traces

Returning for a moment to the actual practice of the sculptor, we can now see how the hand indeed plays a central role. If the initial wedging of the clay, a repeated folding and beating of the material to drive out the air, has an element of brutality to it, the subsequent shaping of the figure proceeds in a more subtle manner. Members are added, first rolled, then attached and shaped by pushing, pinching, squeezing, and pulling. The clay is twisted, stretched, and bent into place.[45] Where the fingers are used, we may recognize the imprints of the incongruities of the skin, the living flesh of the artist. At the same time, these traces are a reminder of his destructive touch; like a dirty fingerprint on a clean window, they disturb the illusion, drawing attention to the artist rather than the image.[46] Often, these marks themselves are distorted by the forces with which the clay is shaped and reshaped. In exceptional cases, this distortion in itself is again made productive. Thus, for example, in one of Bernini's sketch models for angels in the Fogg Art Museum, the artist uses the texture of his fingertip, impressing it in a series of overlaps to suggest the texture of the angel's feathered wings (fig. 4).[47]

As our initial example illustrates, though, an artist such as Bernini only partly adheres to Boselli's advice to work primarily with the fingers. Where the flesh parts – here largely absent – are modelled with the hands, to avoid a "hardness and dryness" as Boselli writes, in other parts chisels or spatulas are used to cut away the material. Larger masses of superfluous clay are removed in broad strokes, leaving sleek planes and sharp ridges. The draperies too, are largely shaped with a tool, its tip leaving smooth traces, becoming more coarse when the clay runs dryer. The speed and resoluteness with which the tools are employed, the *franchezza*, is echoed by the dynamic qualities of the traces they

44 Letter from Lelio Guidiccioni to Gian Lorenzo Bernini, dated 4 June 1633, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ms. Barb.Lat. 2958, f. 205 recto: "Vostra Signoria tenga in punta de dita l'imagini…"

45 On the bending of the material see Cole: The Figura Sforzata (as fn. 9).

46 Cf. Peter Geimer: Image as Trace: Speculations about an Undead Paradigm, in: Differences 18/1 (2007), pp. 7–28; and Bettina Uppenkamp: Der Fingerabdruck als Indiz. Macht, Ohnmacht und künstlerische Markierung, in: Vera Dünkel (ed.): Kontaktbilder, Berlin 2010, pp. 7–17.

47 See Sigel: Clay Modeling Techniques of Gian Lorenzo Bernini (as fn. 14), p. 54 and fig. 16.

Fig. 4 Gian Lorenzo Bernini: Bozzetto for Angel Holding the Scourge, Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA.

leave.[48] The cuts run deeper and broader where more force is applied, ending in a shallow, blunt point when the hand pulls back. In contrast with the fluid feel of the parts modelled with the fingers, those cut with the tool are cruder, providing abrupt changes of direction and moments of sharp contrast between light and dark.

The sculptor, then, does not build his image in a one-directional flow. Every piece of clay that is attached means the misshaping of what was already there. Clean surfaces are marked by rough furrows, smooth traces are smudged

48 For the dynamic qualities related to the term *franchezza* see Gastel: Il Marmo Spirante (as fn. 23), p. 161–184.

and distorted. The material is inscribed by the artist's bodily engagement, not in a single indexical trace, but in a pattern of traces, indicative of both creation and destruction.

This dialectics between creation and destruction forces us to question the "proleptic" view of the artistic procedure adhered to by so many authors. Michelangelo's destructive act, in highlighting the agency of hand and tool, disrupts the one-directional flow from mind to finished model suggested by Vasari's account. Moreover, we have seen that the hand, and in its extension the tool, is also a locus of the sense of touch; as it feels its way through the wet, grainy clay, it engages a material that is tenacious, sometimes unpredictable. Through the sensing hand the material speaks back, suggesting directions, solutions, or new problems. The hand, then, challenges us to inquire both into the materiality of the model, and into the manner the material hosts, so to speak, the pattern of traces indexical of the artist's engagement with it. But it also leaves some question unanswered. By focussing on the destructive nature of the creative process, we seem to have steered away from explaining just how an image asserts itself through the mangled clay. An attempt to formulate an answer to this question should bring us back to the eye that we so quickly abandoned, but also, and again, to the body of the beholder and that of the artist.